

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSC-01 /070 W
-----095432 190741Z /17

R 190605Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6468
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0964

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, BY,SO
SUBJECT: BACKGROUND OF EXILE OF EX-PRESIDENT MICOMBERO TO SOMALIA

REF: BUJUMBURA 0949 (NOTAL)

1. DURING MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MUGANGA AUGUST 18, I
ASKED WHETHER HE COULD GIVE ME BACKGROUND OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR
EX-PRESIDENT MICOMBERO TO GO INTO EXILE IN SOMALIA. I ALSO ASKED
WHETHER THERE WOULD BE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS MOVE.

2. MUGANGA SAID SOME STATEMENT WOULD BE ISSUED SOON, BUT TIMING
AND CONTENTS HAD NOT YET BEEN WORKED OUT.

3. HE NOTED THAT EXILE HAD BEEN THE INITIATIVE OF PRESIDENT
BAGAZA HIMSELF. MUGANGA EXPLAINED THAT FACTIONS HAD BEGUN TO
FORM (PRESUMABLY BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE PRESENT REGIME) OVER
ISSUE OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT MICOMBERO. A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WERE
DEMANDING THAT HE STAND TRIAL FOR HIS MISDEEDS AND FINANCIAL
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PECULATIONS. OTHER INFLUENTIAL PERSONS DEFENDED HIM.

4. BAGAZA DECIDED THAT A SHOW TRIAL WOULD ONLY HARM THE NEW
GOVERNMENT'S "REVOLUTION". IT WOULD DISTRACT THE WHOLE NATION
FOR SIX MONTHS FROM THE HARD WORK ESSENTIAL TO DEVELOPMENT.
MOREOVER, IT WOULD BE JUDGING ESSENTIALLY POLITICAL ACTS, AND
WOULD ACCENTUATE THE DIVISIONS IN BURUNDIAN SOCIETY. THUS,

MUGANGA WAS SENT ON HIS MISSION ON JULY 20, AND DURING COURSE OF FOLLOWING WEEK, PLUS SUBSEQUENT VISIT IN AUGUST, ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXILE WERE COMPLETED. (SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WAS CONVENED AUGUST 13 TO GIVE FORMAL APPROVAL TO MICOMBERO'S DEPARTURE NEXT DAY.)

5. I COMMENTED THAT THIS QUESTION HAD ARISEN IN WAKE OF ARMY'S "STRIKE" OVER PAY AND ALLOWANCES JULY 18. THIS HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY INTERIOR MINISTER NDIKUMANA'S PUBLIC CALL ON JULY 26 FOR PROSECUTION OF MICOMBERO. DID THIS MEAN A RIFT BETWEEN BAGAZA AND NDIKUMANA? MUGANGA AVOIDED AN ANSWER TO THIS, BUT HE CONFIRMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS WITHIN THE RULING GROUP. HE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN ENOUGH INSTABILITY IN THE COUNTRY FOLLOWING THE ARMY'S WORK STOPPAGE, WITHOUT ALLOWING A CUASE OF EVEN WORSE POTENTIAL DISSENSION TO FESTER.

6. MUGANGA SAID NO DECISION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN ON DISPOSITION OF EX-CHIEF OF STAFF NDABAMEYE, WHO REMAINS UNDER HOUSE ARREST. HE CONFIRMED THAT MICOMBERO WAS OF COURSE NOT RPT NOT UNDER ANY COMMITMENT OR COERCION TO REMAIN IN SOMALIA. MICOMBERO HAD DECLARED THAT HE ONLY WANTED THE BEST FOR BURUNDI AND WOULD NOT RPT NOT ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FROM EXILE. (WE HAVE HEARD THAT, AS AN INCENTIVE TO BOTH MICOMBERO AND SIAD-BARRE, BURUNDI MAY HAVE AGREED TO PAY AN ANNUAL SUBSIDY TO MICOMBERO, WHICH WOULD PRESUMABLY BE CUT OFF IN THE EVENT OF MICOMBERO'S "MISBEHAVIOR".)

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7. COMMENT: ON THE WHOLE, BAGAZA HAS SHOWED BOTH INGENUITY AND COMMON SENSE IN ARRANGING THE EXILE, AS WELL AS HIS STRONG DISLIKE FOR HARSH REPRESSIVE MEASURES THAT WOULD SULLY THE IDEALISTIC TONE THAT HE TRIES TO SET FOR HIS REGIME. OTHER LEADERS HAVE MANY FEWER COMPUNCTIONS AND WOULD CLEARLY NOT RPT NOT BE AVERSE TO SOME "REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE". BAGAZA HAS PREVAILED IN THIS INSTANCE, PERHAPS BECAUSE A MAJORITY OF THE OFFICER CORPS REALIZED THAT IT COULD NOT RPT NOT AFFORD A MAJOR SPLIT WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP (E.G., BETWEEN BAGAZA AND NDIKUMANA) JUST WHEN THE ENTIRE REGIME WAS BESET WITH OUTSIDE PRESSURES FROM THE ARMY'S RANKS AS WELL AS FROM ADHERENTS OF THE OLD, MICOMBERO-LED ORDER. CERTAINLY, BAGAZA HAS BOUGHT SOME BREATHING SPACE WITH THIS LATEST MOVE, AND HE MAY BE ABLE TO RECONSOLIDATE HIS GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL. MICOMBERO IN EXILE COULD BE A SYMOBLIC RALLYING POINT FOR HIS BACKERS STILL ACTIVE IN BURUNDI, BUT HE IS NOT RPT NOT LIKELY TO HAVE COMEBACK POTENTIAL IN FACT, OWING TO HIS ALCOHOLISM AND INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY.
MARK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, EXILES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUJUMB00964
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770299-0940
Format: TEL
From: BUJUMBURA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770845/aaaablwc.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 46250358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUJUMBURA 949
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1553164
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BACKGROUND OF EXILE OF EX-PRESIDENT MICOMBERO TO SOMALIA
TAGS: PINS, SREF, BY, SO, (MICOMBERO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/46250358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009